



# AFTER FRESHMAN ENGLISH, LOCK DOWN YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Freshman year is always pretty exciting. In high school you're that much closer to driving and moving out of your parent's house. In college you're that much closer to going to a bar (legally) and eating pizza as many times a week as you want. Enjoy it! Just be sure that between bites of your triple pepperoni you take a few minutes to

control your online presence.

### **While you're online, the same rules you learned in kindergarten still apply**

Don't talk to strangers, don't meet up with them and don't give them your address. Seriously.

### **Data Brokers Collect Data on All Adults, Even the New Ones**

Once you're 18 and out of your parent's house you're in a position to rent an apartment, get a credit card, have a phone in your own name and do all sorts of other adult things. You should be aware that doing those things leaves an electronic crumb trail behind you that data brokers will collect. Once your data is collected, data brokers package that information and sell it. As a result, unlike most high schoolers, people can find you even if you haven't given them your address or phone number. You can cut down on some of the information that's collected by getting a P.O. box or using a school mailbox address as often as possible.

### **Now is also a great time to set up a Google Alert on your name**

In addition to the vanity thrill of seeing where you show up online a [Google alert](#) will also help you stay on top of where your information is and how much of it is available.

### **Joining professional networks like LinkedIn**

Before creating a profile anywhere, take a minute or two to look at what the site makes public. LinkedIn makes almost everything public by default. LinkedIn focuses on your professional past, which is information you're usually pretty free with on your resume. But it's possible that the summer you spent working at Hooters isn't what you want the recruiter at the investment bank finding at the top of your resume so give some thought to what you put up. You also need to be aware of whether any of the information could answer security questions on important websites you use. For example, your first job, your middle name or where you lived as a child.

### **Be careful what you put up on Facebook**

Even if you think you've locked down your Facebook profile, there's no guarantee that anything you put up will actually remain private. That super funny picture of you [pretending to pee on nachos at work could easily come back to haunt you](#). Or at least get you fired from your after school job. And [that mean thing that sounded hysterical in your head, could land you in jail](#). That's not to say you shouldn't enjoy your new found ability to participate online,

it's just that you should avoid putting anything up online that you couldn't show to your Grandma.

Facebook is an amazing place to stay in touch with friends and share what's going on in your life. Posts can be funny, touching, sad or just weird. But here's the thing, once they're up, they're out of your control forever and what you think is hysterical might confuse or even worry your friends and family. One of my teammates posted a funny paragraph complaining about his "co-workers". For anyone familiar with Scooby Doo it was a funny little paragraph spoofing the cartoon and had nothing to do with his actual job. In fact, the whole team had a laugh when we read it a few minutes after he put it up. But for the next three days he got concerned messages from friends and family warning him that his job might be in peril if his boss found out that we was complaining about a stoner co-worker with an over excitable dog.

The lesson is that the funny or edgy things we share with friends in context might not translate well in public (one of the many reasons most of us aren't on SNL). Out of context, edgy comments rapidly go over the cliff of insensitivity. You don't have to have a career planned in politics to worry about what innocent comment might turn out to be a problem.

So while you enjoy all the new opportunities that being a freshman brings, just remember, after English, lock down your social profiles.